I: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

But on lower levels the old practices continue, though more subtly and through indirect negotiations.

In decision-making, nothing seems to have changed. The paternalistic attitudes continue, and only very few of the modern-educated young aspirants really hope for and expect a modernization in the direction of greater efficiency. Only European advisors are outspoken on the subject, among themselves. Ethiopian students who return from university study abroad, return immediately to the "dəj tenat" pattern. Twice a week they bow before the emperor as he leaves the High Court. Very kindly he greets them, usually by name, asks each after his well-being and that of his family. Later when a job has been assigned them, he asks whether they are satisfied, sometimes even inviting them to tell him if they are worried about something. The "father" role is taken literally on both sides.

Office-holders rarely make even petty decisions themselves. Instead, they take the matter to their superior, who is thus swamped with little details which waste his time. But it enables him to keep control through frequent personal contact and reaffirmation of the superordinate-subordinate relationship, and he in turn does "dəj tenat" to his superior.

Office-seekers in the provincial capital maintain a grapevine service for information on the infrequent return of the governor-general from residence or "conferences" in Addis Ababa. Then they besiege his head-

661 quarters by the hundreds, employing messengers to spy
642 out his daily movements and private life that might develop some entrance to him. They even do this when the job has already been given them by a lower officer, for the positive and negative reasons mentioned above. Court orders are usually unobtainable, even by such highly-placed officials as the modern-educated manager of the provincial branch of the State Bank of Ethiopia, without the personal intervention of the governor-general.

Both rural and urban administrations are considerably slowed by this pattern of appointments and decision making, but the old patterns of human relations, and values accompanying and often determining the social organization, can be expected to continue for some time in the future. In this case resistance to change seems complete.

D. The State and the Crown

643 The emperor, "Negusä Nägäst (lit. King of Kings, in the Geez language), used to be primus inter pares, one of several kings whom they had chosen as their superior, or whose military might left no doubt as to his supremacy. At present there is no "negus", and even the "ras" have lost their power together with their private armies. The monarchy thus reighs supreme, theoretically limited only by the voluntary Constitutions granted by

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

212 to facilitate the teaching of Amharic to non-Amharic Ethiopians, illiterates, and for typing.

642 This latter change has not been made largely because of theopposition of the Abyssinian church. The Emperor is officially "Defender of the Faith". His connection with the church follows Old Testament patterns during the reigns of David and Solomon. The "tabot " (ark), which Emperor Menelik I supposedly spirited away from the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem to its secret place at Aksum, is regarded as guarding the liberty of the countryto this day. Church and State are thus intimately connected, and when Mussolini threatened Ethiopia, the Emperor and his chieftains swore to defend the "tabot" with their lives. After liberation, the Coptic Abyssinian church was reaffirmed as the State church, though weakened in its temporal powers(esp. feudal land tenure). When the last link with Alexandria was severed a few years ago, the Abyssinian church became fully the established state church.

173 The traditional epic of the "Solomonic Dynasty", the book "Käbrä Nägäst", is still honored officially, and taken literally by the people. It contains an extension of the Biblical story of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to the court of King Solomon, and claims she conceived a son, Menelik I, the first Abyssinian ruler of the Solomonic Dynasty. The book may possibly date from the 13th century, justifying the resumption of this dynasty.

693 and thus not a contender for the throne. He was the chief justice, for he could hear appeals even from the highest court in the land, and act as arbitrator and judge in high-level quarrels between feudal lords and even involving the king himself. His role as chief counselor of the king has now been taken by the "Tsahafi" (lit. scribe), who has risen to that position from that of long-time private secretary, at present Wolda-Giyorgis.

692 The present High Court has original and appellate jurisdiction over all cases in Ethiopia, criminal as well as civil. Majority opinion of the judges prevails. In 1942 a Supreme Imperial Court was appointed to hear appeals from the High Court, but it convenes only intermittently. A secret Crown Court is called together in special treason cases affecting the old nobility, or the officers of the new army.

671 177 A new Civil Law Code is still being worked out, by a series of European jurists invited for that purpose. Meanwhile new decrees are published intermittently in the official "Negarit Gazeta" (lit. the drum gazette), in both Amharic and English. The Attorney-General is a foreigner (for some time Mr. Nathan Marein), but the Minister of Justice, the Legislative Consultative Committee and the President of the High Court are Ethiopians, with a range of modern education from very little to average.

642 The Constitution of 1931, further liberalized in 1955, was a free-will gift of the Emperor. It established a Parliament of two houses, the upper directly appointed,

692 the lower indirectly appointed. No elections have been held; they have been postponed to the day when "education shall have been increased". In actual practice the monarchy thus remains absolute in function, and even legislation that is not directly urged by the emperor requires his signature and cannot be overridden.

563 (d) A problem of law that did not concern the old Amhara legislative authorities but that has become, though still dormant and in abeyance, a problem in recent years, is that of juridicial privileges of sectarian minorities, particularly Ethiopian Muslims.

In the past, Muslims lived there much as they did under the "Millet" system of Ottoman Turks, i.e. under their own religious jurisdiction in all internal affairs such as personal status, inheritance, marriage, divorce, endowments, etc. In Amhara areas, the Muslim ecclesiastical judge, the "Qadi" performs the functions of the "çheqa shum" and the "atbiya danya" judge for the Muslim population of his sector. He also heads their own school system of Quran schools, much as the Coptic priests head the local church schools.

563 692 There was no central Muslim organization, beyond this local structure. As part of modern centralization, the present emperor issued the "Qadi's Court Proclamation" in 1942 and 1944. It created a "Naibas" Council in Addis Ababa, to function as a traditional Muslim "Sharia" Court of Appeals above the local decisions of the Qadis. This structure, in turn, is supervised by the (Coptic) Minister of Justice of the central govern-

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

the Angrab and Kahha, is the Mahometan town. These rivers inclose the town on its N. and S. sides, and join on the W. On the S. E. part of it is the church of Debra-berhan. On the N. E. is Kedus Gabriel. Two suburbs above Kedus Gabriel, is Anta Naggar, the hill, where, till Yasous's time, the Tigre, in consequence of a proclamation, were obliged to halt, and not allowed to enter Gondar. 361

In Abyssinia there remains not a shadow of the hospitality, which is said to be a trait in the character of barbarous nations. 574

They divide the day into five parts (humisi). From the twilight, which is here short, it is nagga; about nine it is called selest, or the third hour; mid-day is kutter; three o'clock, tessaat; and sun-set, serk. They judge by the height of the sun, having neither clocks nor watches. The other hours mentioned in their books are counted 1, 2, 3, &c. after dawn, sun-rise, or sun-set. 805

There are two kinds of monarchy; one is absolute, where there are no written laws, but the will of the prince carried into effect by his command and force; another is, where there are laws and restraints, but these occasionally broken through. The Abyssinian government is neither of those. There are no laws: the lives of the king's subjects and their lands are *de jure* his; he is absolute and sole master of their lives and property: Yet he has no military force; this is all in the hands of the governors of provinces, whose safety lies in keeping the prince in want of every thing. It is a monstrous kind of monarchy, and to this are owing the continual wars and rebellions. While the districts were small, these were prevented; but minorities, weak reigns, &c. have united them into great ones, each of which are more than a match for the sovereign; indeed, the forty-four nagareets of Tigre united are more than a match for all Abyssinia. Damot and Agow-midre, joined to Maitsha, when they please, starve the capital, and leave the king not only without army and provisions, but even meat and clothes for himself. The Turkish and Galla wars have accelerated this state of affairs. Each of the governments have become a kind of fiefs, very rarely not granted to the family of the deceased, and that one of it most likely to be serviceable. 642 631

[p. 53]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5 •
Ethiopia MP1
Tigre MN9

I

INTRODUCTION

AMHARA TRADITION AND ETHIOPIA'S MODERNIZATION

THE FACT OF AMHARA DOMINANCE

Of the many traditions which are alive in the empire of Ethiopia—those of the nomadic Danakil and the sedentary Wollamo, the hippopotamus-eating Woyto and the ensete-eating Gurage, the age-graded Konso and the patrilineal Somali, the Judaic Falasha and the Muslim Bani 'Amer, and many others—clearly the dominant tradition is that of the people known throughout history to the outside world as the Abyssinians. Living on the temperate highland massif in the northern and central regions of the country, these people have gained their subsistence through the plow cultivation of cereal grains; have organized their polity as a feudal kingdom, and have remained steadfast in their Monophysite Christian faith since its introduction to the land in the fourth century.

The Abyssinians comprise two linguistic and geographical groups—the Amhara and the Tigre.* The Tigre inhabit the northern part of Ethiopia, above the Takazzē River; their lands fall in what are now the province of Tigre and the former Italian colony of Eritrea. Their language, Tigrinya, is

* Abyssinians object to the term "Abyssinian," since it has been used pejoratively by foreigners, even though they do use its indigenous counterpart, *"Hăbashā,"* among themselves. The term apparently derives from the name of one of the South Arabian tribes which migrated to Ethiopia in antiquity—the Habashat. In deference to this objection, I shall use the compound "Amhara-Tigre" in place of "Abyssinian" wherever feasible. The name "Ethiopia" will be used consistently to refer to the national polity which, throughout its history, has included other peoples and traditions as well as the Amhara-Tigre.

1. [The Abyssinians, composed of Amhara and Tigre--Analyst]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

demonstrate some affiliation with the Solomonic line; the marriage of one of these into a local dynasty contributed an added buttress to its traditionalist claims. The other was what seems to be a still more deeply rooted disposition for decentralized hegemony based on the ancient character of the society. For, as Cerulli has recently suggested, the origins of the Ethiopian state were such as to lay the foundation for a persisting order of feudalism. The movement of South Arabs to the Eritrean coast and highlands took place, not through the conquest of an indigenous population by a united invader, as in the Norman Conquest of England, but by the intermittent emigration and settlement of distinct tribes from South Arabia into various parts of the African territory. Thus, Cerulli concludes, we see in Ethiopia "a feudalism expanded from the roots: a number of principalities or peoples which, independent on African land after their emigration, have finally been regrouped in a higher political unity, yet still conserving in the feudal system thus constituted part of their autonomy and their individuality."[87] If this is so, it would constitute an added traditional element in the sense of legitimacy of local dynastic interests.

All this suggests that we must look to two sources for the prestige of the *makuännent*—that recruitment into the secular elite came from "below" as well as from "above." These two bases of noble status are indicated by the etymology of two Amharic words commonly applied to the local nobility, *shum* and *bälabbät*. *Shum* (or *seyum*) comes from a root which means to invest with high position. The emperor, as we have seen, is *seyuma egziabhër* ("invested by God") and he in turn is the source of authority for investing other dignitaries. The status associated with the word *shum* is therefore based on the act of investiture by a sovereign. *Bälabbät*, on the other hand, has the literal meaning, "one who has a father"; in other words, one who has a significant father, a notable ancestry. This status refers to claims to deference which are based on birth.

Claims based on birth, moreover, were closely tied to the ownership of land and supported by local territorial allegiances. This appears most strikingly in the office of *çhïqä shum*, the lowest level official, who is appointed, to be sure, but by the local people themselves from a small number of *bälabbät* whose eligibility for the office rests on their inheritance of rights to certain specified pieces of land. Other local offices, like *malkaña* and *meslanë*, were normally given by regional governors to *bälabbät* indigenous to the area. The sacred sentiment of fealty to a monarch, whose charisma rested both on membership in a hallowed dynasty and the hallowed act of coronation, thus competed in Abyssinian souls with deeply felt sentiments of attachment to members of noted families who symbolized local rights and traditions. Abyssinian political structure at any given time was determined by the relative strength of the forces supported by these two principles of legitimacy.

Neither principle was ever realized in pure form. No matter how great his

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

642 643 565 authority, the emperor could never afford to ignore the hereditary claims of regional *bālābbāt* in dispensing favors and making appointments. He needed a minimum of support from regional lords who commanded devoted followers, and he could not with impunity alienate any number of these at a given time. In practice, imperial favor was accorded *both* on the basis of personal loyalty and military ability, and of ascriptive claims to rank based on birth. The exercise of imperial authority was often a question simply of confirming the leadership of a locally successful *bālābbāt*.

565 554 With regard to regionally based strength, on the other hand, birth was not a sufficient factor to assure a man a high position. (It was not even necessary, strictly speaking. Any man could attempt to build up a position of power by attracting followers. He had a much better chance, however—a chance to attain authority, and not merely force—if he came from a noted family.) If, as the son of an important lord, he inherited his father's position, he had to prove himself a suitable leader or risk being deposed by the men of the area. At the very least he had to withstand competition from his brothers. Thus, as we saw [175] in the history of Manz, two of Nagāssi's sons were deposed before the men of Manz found in Sebstē a leader worthy of his father's mantle. Military ability, political shrewdness, and lavish generosity toward one's followers were the decisive characteristics which, together with strong ambition, could enable the son of a *bālābbāt* to attract followers and make claims of his own. With adequate forces, he could even depose a regional governor and take his place, so long as he took possession of the official drum (*nagārit*) of the office.[88] For complete legitimation, however, it was usually necessary to secure con- [643] firmation of the rule of a locally successful *bālābbāt* by the emperor. This was the reason why Nagāssi is said to have journeyed to Gondar.

642 643 565 175 In terms of the distribution of political authority, then, Abyssinian history may be viewed as an oscillation between the emperor's efforts to define local nobles as his agents and their own efforts to attain continuity and autonomy. The available sources concerning the emperors of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries suggest that their efforts were to a large extent successful. The ensuing "barbarian invasions" so weakened the empire that a more locally centered distribution of power became inevitable. At first only the scope of the monarchy was reduced, as the emperor came to govern a smaller area. In consequence, in outlying regions such as Manz, Gishē, and Merhābētē in northern Shoa, virtual sovereignty was wielded by the local *bālābbāt*. Nevertheless, for a good century after its founding Gondar served as a real imperial capital, and its emperors retained authority over the lords in their shrunken empire. Then, as the monarchy began its inexorable decline due to internal rivalries and the movement of Galla into court and capital, localism triumphed. Ethiopia's Age of the Princes (1769–1855) was as decentralized a political system as was twelfth-century France or fourteenth-century Japan.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

It was at this time that the *makuānnent* came into their own. More unabashedly than ever they constituted, not a hereditary aristocracy in corporate opposition to the king, but a plurality of proud centers of rank—partly inherited, partly achieved—enjoying virtual autonomy. To move toward a modern nation it would be necessary to brake their centrifugal force.

The Clergy

Like the nobility, the clergy may be divided into those who are significant at the national level and those who are primarily local dignitaries. The former reside close to the imperial court, while the latter are thickly distributed around monasteries, churches, and wildernesses all over the country.

The highest ecclesiastical authority in Abyssinia was the *abuna* who, from the time of Frumentius in the fourth century until the death of Abuna Qerlos in 1949, was with few exceptions an appointee of the Coptic Patriarch at Alexandria. Chosen from the Egyptian monks of the convent of St. Anthony near the Red Sea, the *abuna* was brought, at great expense to the emperors, to live out his life in an alien land. Ignorant of the language and customs of the country, he played little part in the conduct of church affairs or in affairs of court; and when he did try to do so, his efforts were usually abruptly checked by jealous clerics and suspicious kings. His functions were purely ritual, but indispensable: he alone had authority to anoint and crown the emperor, to confer orders, and to absolve vows. From numerous revenues, rents, and fees, the *abuna* enjoyed a considerable income. Like the emperor, he was regarded as sacred because of the charisma of his office, and spent most of his time secluded from the public.[39]

Second in rank was the *eçhagē*, an appointment made by the emperor. This was the traditional title of the abbot of the convent of Dabra Libānos in Shoa, which in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries gained hegemony over Abyssinian monasticism. The *eçhagē* served as administrative head of the church and had jurisdiction over all monks and monasteries. The most esteemed of the Ethiopian clergy, he tended to wield more actual power than the *abuna*. His provincial deputies, called *liqa kāhenāt*, controlled the secular clergy. This office was also bestowed by the emperor, and its functions included presenting candidates for ordination and deciding questions of protocol in connection with religious ceremonies.

In addition to these supreme dignitaries of the church, a small number of churchmen enjoyed pre-eminent status by virtue of their activities at the imperial court. These included the *aqābē sa'āt* ("guardian of the [canonical] hours"), the chief ecclesiastic at court, and during part of the reign of Zar'a Yā'qob the only official with unrestricted access to the king; the *qēs hāṭsē* ("king's chaplain"); the *liqa dabtarā* ("chief of the *dabtarā*"); and *liqa mammerān* ("chief of the learned men"). These four served as the four su-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

source of the influence enjoyed by the clergy. The latter constituted a largely autonomous status group which no emperor could afford to antagonize indefinitely. The attempt to build a more powerful central government and introduce cultural reforms thus required some alteration of their independent status as well as that of the old nobility.

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THE FEUDAL ORDER IN TRANSITION

The Decline of the Old Nobility

It must always have been the policy of the Ethiopian emperors, except for those few who did not relish the political side of their office, to seek to maximize their control over the regional nobility. They did this, we have seen, either by granting land, power, and rank to men who were completely dependent on them, or else by controlling, through military and diplomatic means, those lords whose birthright and regional strength gave them strong claims to their positions.

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During the past century, however, the idea of subordinating regional nobles to imperial control has come to be conceived more radically and has become the core of a slowly emerging ideal of a modern nation-state. Some such vision was certainly behind the tortuous career of Tēwodros II, whose policy was a reaction against the desperate disunity which the Age of the Princes brought to Abyssinia and to the growing threat from foreign powers. In Plowden's official report to the British government in 1855, he described Tēwodros' work as follows:

> The arduous task of breaking the power of the great feudal chiefs—a task achieved in Europe only during the reigns of many consecutive kings—he has commenced by chaining almost all who were dangerous, avowing his intention of liberating them when his power shall be consolidated. He has placed soldiers of the different provinces under the command of his own trusty followers, to whom he has given high titles, but no power to judge or punish: thus, in fact, creating generals in place of feudal chieftains, more proud of their birth than of their monarch, and organising a new nobility—a legion of honour dependent on himself, and chosen specially for their daring and fidelity.[84]

The task of displacing the great feudal chiefs proved to be scarcely less arduous in Ethiopia than in Europe, however. Tēwodros' high hopes were shattered against the opposing forces of regional ambitions and clerical disaffection. The national unity he won through conquest and reform did not survive to the end of his reign.

Yohānnes IV (1871–89) likewise aimed at uniting the nation, but was distracted from serious internal reform by the need to fight off the encroach-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

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ments of Egyptians, Mahdists, and Europeans. His domestic policy was more concerned with the imposition of religious uniformity than with political transformation.

Menelik revived Tēwodros' policy of creating a band of generals loyal only to himself. He did this partly by raising capable men with no connections to high position: Rās Gobānā and Fitāwrāri Hābta Giyorgis, two of his most important generals, were originally Galla prisoners. The power of the feudal chieftains he manipulated by traditional techniques, sending them to posts far removed from their home bases, and arranging political marriages. But Menelik did not decisively undercut the authority of the great provincial lords, and at his death the old political structure was still more or less intact.

The experience of these emperors was not forgotten by Haile Selassie, who seems to have made it his primary and unceasing ambition to assure his position by breaking down every sort of autonomous power where it previously existed or threatened to develop. Thanks to his policies of centralization and to modern means of transport and communication he was able to become more of an effective autocrat than any of his predecessors.

The main development during the period of his regency as Rās Tafari (1917–28) was the stiffening of his military posture. To start with he had the regional forces of Harar Province, formerly his father's governorship, which he had acquired through the favor of Empress Taitu (Menelik's wife) following Menelik's paralysis. He built up his strength by making improvements in Harar that increased his revenues and the number of his soldiers, and acquired fiefs elsewhere. Following the death of Empress Zauditu's commander of the imperial troops in 1926, he took command of these troops and brought some of his own forces into Addis Ababa. By 1928 he was strong enough to demand the title of *negus* from Zauditu and, as is well known, acceded as emperor upon her death two years later.

[204] During these years Rās Tafari was gradually promoting the idea of a transformation of the position of the old nobility. As early as 1926 a letter published in his weekly newspaper, *Berhānennā Salām*, suggested that the prevailing feudal system of provincial government be replaced by a system based on salaried administrators.[88] An actual change of that order was out of the question at that time. A contemporary American observer thus described some of the obstacles:

> Ras Hailu of Gojjam, Ras Guksah, chief of Amhara, Dejasmatch Ayalu, powerful head of Simien, Dejasmatch Gabra Salassy of Tigre, and Ras Kassa of Shoa, are supreme lords in the rough highlands of the north country. Far removed from the central authority, thirty to forty days' journey, some of them, they are out of touch—living in a different world from that of Addis Ababa. Hundreds of lesser chiefs rally to their standards, each

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

> with his numerous following. In the South it is the same and we heard that Dejasmatch Balcha . . . ruling thousands of square miles and no one knows how many subjects with a hand of iron, pays no taxes, no tribute, no share in the upkeep of government. It is common talk that he has been summoned to Addis Ababa upon more than one occasion and has sent back the reply: "If you want me, come down here into Sidamo and get me."[56]

The most that Rās Tafari could do to realize his political ambitions then was to work patiently within the existing structure, attempting whenever possible to fill the posts of provincial governors with men of his own.

After his coronation, Haile Selassie continued to be faced by considerable opposition from provincial lords. The governors of Tigre and Gojjam were particularly troublesome, and some nobles from those regions joined their lots to the Italian cause during the occupation. Not until the restoration was Haile Selassie able to effectuate policies which would strip the old nobility of their autonomy once and for all.

Three major innovations of the years after 1941 accomplished this end. One was the establishment of a standing military force under the Emperor's direct control that rendered the existence of separate regional armies unnecessary and possessed a capability clearly superior to that of any force a rebellious lord might muster. This included the national army, trained for a number of years by a British mission; and the Imperial Bodyguard, reestablished after the liberation on a new and expanded basis. These troops monopolized the modern weapons in the country and the limited air power, later developed into a separate air force. In a short time there appeared a new class of military officers, trained with modern techniques, and living as salaried employees of the government. The traditional function of the noble as military commander was thus made obsolete.

Second, under a governmental decree of 1942 a new fiscal system was set up under the Ministry of Finance. In this system the peasants have been obliged to pay a fixed quota of taxes in money, for which they are given a written receipt (*kārnē*). These taxes are collected by employees of the Ministry of Finance and transmitted directly to the provincial capitals or to Addis Ababa. This has been a popular reform among the peasantry, who are no longer required to submit arbitrary amounts of goods and labor to their district rulers. For the nobility, however, it means that their legitimate income is restricted to what they produce on their own lands, the rents they receive from their tenants, and—if they hold office—to what they receive from the government as a monthly salary; though in practice it continues to be supplemented, in many cases, by bribes and illegally imposed fees. Thus, they can no longer support a significant number of followers.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

175 Finally, by reorganizing the provincial administration through the bureau-
178 cratic machinery of the Ministry of Interior, the power and prestige of
631 regional appointments have been reduced. The authority of the central gov-
642 ernment has been enhanced by redrawing the provincial boundaries so as to cut across, in many cases, what were traditional administrative regions. Governors at all levels have been made ordinary employees of the Ministry of Interior, with assistants and secretaries provided by the Ministry, who serve as a constant check on their activities. Earlier in his reign, Haile Selassie deprived the great provincial governors of the right to order capital punishment and of the prerogative of conferring lesser titles.

178 Stripped of their military functions, large revenues, and other means of
565 building up their positions, members of the most important noble families
631 have had no alternative but to submit totally to the sovereign authority of
642 Haile Selassie. This has meant, in most instances, their relegation to posts of
646 high prestige but little consequence: diplomatic posts abroad and, more commonly, the senate. Established by the Constitution of 1931 as the upper house of parliament, the senate was to consist of members "appointed by His Majesty the Emperor from among the Nobility (Mekuanent) who have for a long time served his Empire as Princes or Ministers, Judges or high military officers." The institution was re-affirmed in the revised Constitution of 1955, and has provided, as one of its continuing functions, an outlet for dignitaries with too much prestige of their own to be trusted with administrative positions or permitted to reside in their home regions.

565 Many lesser nobles have remained in the provinces with appointments as
631 regional governors and judges. Because of the shift of political authority to
693 Addis Ababa, they tend to feel forsaken and dispossessed. They regard the
578 behavior of those who occupy high governmental posts in Addis Ababa as selfish and corrupt, and view with no little bitterness the fact that youngsters with college degrees earn a great deal more than they. (A subdistrict gov-
[445] ernor, for example, earns Eth$50 per month, while those with an A.B. automatically start any government job at Eth$450.)

178 Nevertheless, these lesser nobles continue to comport themselves in the
565 aristocratic manner of the old nobility and retain their high status in the
554 eyes of the local populace. However modest their resources now—and many continue to enjoy quite sizable holdings of land—they are proud of what-
[571] ever titles and offices have been given them. Though their part in the national political structure and status system is not so weighty as that of their forebears, they remain the only fully accepted secular elite in the provinces. It is they who issue the day-to-day commands to the people, and they alone for whom the peasantry has unflinching respect. Short of a brutally totalitarian program that is willing to ignore the sentiments of the mass of tradition-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

directed peasantry, and suffer the consequences, no dynamic program of agricultural and social development can take place in Abyssinian areas that does not enlist the active cooperation of the local *bälābbät* and *shum*.*

The Decline of the Clergy

Although the church was instrumental in bringing Rās Tafari to power—by relieving the nobles of their oath of allegiance to Līj Iyāsu—it was as a whole not sympathetic to his policy once he began to rule. Foremost champions of tradition, the clergy viewed with suspicion Rās Tafari's interest in modern education and other reforms. So pronounced was their conservatism that his weekly *Berhānennā Salām* found it newsworthy to report the fact that the clergy of one important provincial church were actually reading the Addis Ababa newspaper each week.[57] He was wise to act gingerly at first, limiting ecclesiastical reform to such matters as publishing religious texts in Ge'ez and Amharic, and encouraging the work of foreign missionaries.

In the past three decades, however, changes of many sorts have had the effect of reducing the degree of independent authority which the clergy traditionally enjoyed. These changes included the achievement of independence from the Alexandrian Patriarchate; the weakening of the church under the Italian occupation; subjection of church administration to the central government; and competition from the secular government schools.

Rās Tafari initiated the policy of seeking independence from Alexandria in 1929, when he secured the investiture of five Ethiopian bishops. This gave indigenous clergy, for the first time, the right to ordain priests and deacons, although they remained subordinate to the Egyptian archbishop. In 1950 an Ethiopian bishop, the *eçhagē*, was consecrated as archbishop; and in 1958, culminating Haile Selassie's patient and skillful negotiations, complete autonomy from Alexandria was achieved.

The attainment of ecclesiastical independence has heightened the prestige of national church officials in Ethiopia. It has brought about a re-organization of the national church hierarchy, in which fifteen bishops now hold office, one for each of the fourteen provinces, and one in Jerusalem. At the same time it has reduced the effective freedom of the clergy as a separate status group. Deprived of the external source of legitimacy which the Egyptian *abuna* formerly provided, the clergy are now entirely subordinated to the power of the Emperor. This condition was formally articulated in the Constitution of 1955, which made the election and appointment of archbishops and bishops

* A potentially significant medium of communication between them and the central government is the Chamber of Deputies, which since 1957 has brought popularly elected notables from the provinces to Addis Ababa.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

"subject to the approval of the Emperor" and gave him "the right to promulgate the decrees, edicts, and public regulations of the Church, except those concerning monastic life and other spiritual administrations."

The general position of the church had already been weakened by the events of the Italian occupation. Italian policy resulted in the destruction of many church buildings and the massacre of numerous monks, including those of the hallowed monastery of Dabra Libānos. Of the national leaders, the Egyptian *abuna* was out of the country from 1937 on; two of the bishops were put to death, including the much venerated martyr, Abuna Pēṭros;* and the remaining two compounded the demoralization by openly supporting the invaders. One of these went so far as to anathematize resistance fighters and forbade Ethiopian priests to give Christian burial to those who died as patriots. In some areas, moreover, it is said that the local clergy lost much prestige by welcoming the invader with open arms.

Haile Selassie thus had a much stronger hand in his dealings with the clergy when he returned from exile in 1941. The next year he issued a decree which sharply restricted the perquisites of the local clergy. Their landed properties were no longer tax free, but now carried the obligation to pay taxes at the normal rate into a central church treasury. The church was deprived of temporal jurisdiction over its ordained and lay members, including the authority to inflict fines, and was denied the right to corvée labor from peasants living on their lands. (In practice these latter restrictions of authority are frequently ignored in the provinces.)

The development of a nationwide system of government schools, finally, has broken the clergy's monopoly of educational facilities. Wherever government schools have invaded traditional Abyssinian regions, the clergy tend to be defensive and resentful. The specific issues have been the decreased prestige of certain traditional religious subjects, which are not taught in these schools, and the comparatively lower income of church teachers. Thus, a full-time teacher of reading attached to a monastery may receive Eth$15 a month from the central church treasury, whereas a government school teacher in the same area teaching the same subject may earn Eth$150 a month.

Despite all these blows, the clergy still retain much the same prestige as ever in the provinces. Their influence over public opinion is considerable, and has been a major factor in discouraging families in traditional Christian areas like Manz from sending their children to government schools.† Despite

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* A statue of Abuna Pēṭros has been raised in the center of Addis Ababa. His fate has been celebrated in the verse drama by Makonnen Endālkātchaw, *Ya-dam Demṭs*, translated into English as *The Voice of Blood* by Endālkātchaw Makonnen.

† When the Ethiopian government is ready to inaugurate a major program of provincial education, it should not prove difficult to overcome this opposition. A number of provincial priests, with whom the author has discussed this matter, have signified their willingness to serve as

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

recent restrictions on their income, it remains considerable. It is conservatively estimated that they possess at least fifteen per cent of the arable land in Ethiopia, and their general inertia with regard to agricultural reform remains a significant conservative factor.

In the modernizing sector, the position of the clergy has been much more vulnerable. The traditional forms of erudition and piety seem to bear little relevance to the intellectual and moral needs of the modernizing elements. The church's reputation for hostility to change further alienates them from it. But it is by no means certain that the church's position will only decline with the passage of time. Ethiopia will be profoundly susceptible to the appeal of traditional revivalist sentiment as the strains attendant on modernization increase; and by its publication of two monthlies, since 1947, the church has already shown, albeit in a limited way, its capacity to employ modern media for traditionalist purposes. On the other hand, if the tiny band of Western-educated church leaders succeed in promoting some degree of modernization in the church, through institutions like the Theological School and the Orthodox Students Association, the clergy may yet play a constructive part in the social and moral life of transitional Ethiopia. It remains to be seen whether its leadership will be effective enough to move the traditionalist clergy to make those adjustments necessary for survival as a respected status group in the modernizing sector.

The New Men of Power

After curbing the independent power of the *makuānnent*, Haile Selassie was careful to prevent others from taking their place in the political structure, determined as he was to consolidate in his own hand all the powers they once wielded. As a result of his centralization of government in Addis Ababa, however, a new group of men have gained pre-eminent status at the national level. We may call this group the "new nobility": "new" because of their development of an urban style of life, and because their influence as an elite is largely directed to the modernizing infrastructure, and "nobility" because of their perpetuation of the traditional hierarchical image of a superior and privileged status group. The core of this status group consists of government officials with the ranks of minister, vice-minister, and assistant minister, who function essentially as a personal administrative staff for the monarch.

As observed above, Tēwodros clearly saw the need for creating a new class of nobles, freed from regional interests and acting solely according to the

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elementary instructors in the government schools, and at salaries much lower than the better trained Ministry teachers. The presence of just one or two priests in these schools would eliminate the traditionalist opposition to them that is now so strong. The situation may be compared to that in Ceylon, where the opposition of Buddhist monks to government schools was eliminated by incorporating them as teachers in those schools.

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175 178 665 642 645 royal will. A solid foundation for such a class was not possible, however, until the central government had been sufficiently stabilized and expanded. These conditions began to be met under Menelik, who established Addis Ababa in the last decade of the nineteenth century and in 1907 created a number of ministries. Housed in buildings inside the palace compound, the ministries were initially regarded as little more than an ornament to dress up the imperial court. Although men of some stature, like Afa Negus Nasibu and Fitāwrāri Hābta Giyorgis, were named to the posts, the offices themselves did not acquire much prestige. It was no great matter when, five years after the death of Menelik, the ministers were turned out of office by a group of military officers at the instigation of Rās Tafari and sent home to their provincial estates.

175 178 645 647 [652] After becoming emperor himself, however, Haile Selassie revived and enlarged the ministerial system. Since the restoration, it has expanded into a complex bureaucratic structure. In addition to some sixteen ministries, a number of specialized government agencies have been formed, and the military and judicial hierarchies and the diplomatic corps have been considerably expanded. The rapid growth of the central government in the past two decades is reflected in its budgetary expenditures, which went from about US$10 million in 1942 to an estimated US$110 million in 1962.

178 647 571 554 565 The growth of this governmental machinery has provided a new basis for elite status in Ethiopia. Mobility channels now run in terms of appointments in the government bureaucracy. The periodic announcement of appointments by the Emperor has become the focus of public interest in Ethiopia since the liberation. Every new list of appointments provides the occasion for intense gossip and *de rigueur* congratulatory parties at the homes of the favored.

178 565 571 The new class of high governmental functionaries under Haile Selassie may be regarded as a transitional elite: partly traditional, partly modernizing. With regard to basis of recruitment, values represented, and style of life, the new nobility present, on the one hand, a direct continuation of the old nobility; and, on the other hand, many features novel in Abyssinian society.

178 565 [646] To some extent recruitment of members of the new nobility was not a creation of new dignitaries, but rather an absorption of members of the old nobility into the new political organization. The recruitment of *makuännent* into the senate, which after all is an organ of the central government, may be taken as an ambiguous instance of this. Some others were given important posts in the civil and military administrations. These include members of the princely families of Shoa, Tigre, Wag, Lasta, and Gojjam; the Bakere clan, royalty from the Galla province of Wallaga; and scions of the *makuännent* who were important in Menelik's day or before, members of aristocratic clans which go by the names of Bēzā, Mojā, Sofanē, and Addisgē. Such persons are likely to have been awarded the old military titles for purely honorific pur-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

phenomenon, however, the intellectuals are already unmistakably in evidence, and if one contrasts them as a social stratum with the new nobility their outlines become readily visible.

The new nobility came into being in consequence of Haile Selassie's policy of political *centralization*. The status of its members rests on their possession of political influence, measured partly by the strength of their personal followings but primarily by how close they are to the Emperor, and on the Westernized style of life made possible by wealth acquired through political office, rents, and commerce. Its ascendance as a status group may be located approximately in the decade after 1945, the year in which failure of a revolt in Tigre Province marked the end of attempts to assert provincial claims inspired by allegiance to members of the old nobility. The decade was marked by rapid growth of the factors supportive of centralized government and the new nobility: expansion of the bureaucracy, strengthening of the national military force, and economic advance.*

The intelligentsia, by contrast, has come into being in consequence of Haile Selassie's policy of technical *modernization*. The status of its members rests on their possession of secular Western education, status differences within the group depending on the academic degree attained and the prestige of the school attended. The development of the intelligentsia as a counter-elite has its beginnings in the present decade, beginning around 1955, the year of the jubilee celebration of the twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Emperor's coronation. This was a lavishly contrived affair which, occurring at about the time that the first sizable group of postwar college students had returned from abroad, accentuated in their minds a sense of alienation from the *ancien régime*. The present decade is marked by dramatic increase in the number of Ethiopians with college degrees and secondary school certificates, and in the general prestige of education as such in the country. For, it will be remembered, in the late forties the government found it necessary to pay families to get them to send their children to school; whereas by the late fifties, there were far too many applicants for the available places.

The pattern of recruitment of members of the new nobility has been continuous with important elements of the traditional social system. It rests on the belief in the sanctity of the emperor and the legitimacy of his unlimited political authority, and the practice of emperors sometimes to raise to high position men of low background who were *ipso facto* more trustworthy. The personnel of the new nobility, moreover, have in a number of cases been drawn from members of old noble families.

By contrast, the formation of the intelligentsia represents a break with the

* Due largely to trade in coffee, whose export value climbed more or less steadily from Eth$17 million in 1947 to Eth$123 million in 1957.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

tion has been more closely than ever tied to the service and support of the Crown.

The system-integrative value was not only subordinate to transcendental religious values in the traditional order, but it was also in competition with the separate instrumental orientations of the feudal lords. This introduced the chief instability of the traditional system. Commitment to the separate goals of the feudal lords chronically competed with that of loyalty to the emperor; and after the calamities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the former decisively gained the upper hand. With the ascendance of the system-integrative value under Haile Selassie, accordingly, the semi-autonomous status of feudal nobles could no longer be tolerated, and their powers and functions were sharply reduced.

In their stead, but as arms of the emperor and living symbols of allegiance to him, a new nobility was established as the focus of national power and prestige. New goals were pronounced for the system as a whole, but integrative considerations of loyalty remained decisive: no system goals were pursued which threatened to disrupt the internal security of the regime. Finally, a generation of young men was trained in skills that would provide sufficient technical competence to provide amenities and façades to edify the emperor and his courtiers as well as to increase the nation's military strength, standard of living, and international prestige. The integrative strategy in dealing with educated Ethiopians has consistently been one of exploiting their skills without permitting the values represented by them—technical competence and national development—to be fully actualized; to make them, in effect, appendages of the court just as much as the new nobility.

Haile Selassie has sought to do this by maintaining a paternalistic relationship with the intellectuals. Government pronouncements stress that whatever advantages Ethiopians have had by way of education have resulted from his personal generosity. The Emperor has sought to make visible his paternal solicitation and bounty, for example, by visits to various secondary schools and colleges, and by sending them baskets of fruit on occasion. He has personally conferred the diplomas to all graduates of the University College. Similarly, Ethiopian students who have returned from study abroad have normally been expected to have an audience with the Emperor, in which their occupational plans are discussed and they are given some fatherly advice from the throne. The following excerpts from typical audiences of this nature were reported in the *Ethiopian Herald*.

[A speech by a returnee]:

Your Imperial Majesty!

I feel honoured and privileged to speak on behalf of my fellow students expressing our deep gratitude to Your Imperial Majesty. . . .

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Political and Military Organization (prior to 1942)

*121 571 The Amhara political system was based, as has been suggested, on an interlocking hierarchy of patron-client relationships. Given the tremendous importance of domination and deference in such relationships, the demands made upon an inferior by his superior seem virtually unlimited. Nevertheless, [642] the system as a whole was characterized by a high degree of decentralization and laissez faire, and there were safeguards for protecting the rights of individuals at all levels.

*121 651 641 The basic dimension of constraint concerned the imposition of taxes of various sorts. The original meaning of the verb "to rule" in Amharic (*nag-gasa*) is "to collect tribute"; and this was the primary activity of rulers at all levels. As we have seen, provincial rulers had to deliver an annual tribute to their overlords and the latter a tribute to the monarch; local rulers, in turn, obtained income from the labors of peasants and artisans, exacting both land taxes and tithes. Peasants working land which had been granted to a noble or church as *gult* were obliged to hand over the full produce of half their land to the landlords. In addition to paying these periodically collected taxes, the peasants were liable to have their stores confiscated when required to billet soldiers or subjected to raids by passing armies.

[466] The peasants were further required to furnish a certain amount of *corvée* labor each month to their rulers and landlords. This might be used for purely personal projects, like cultivating the lord's estates, or for quasi-public ones, *121 641 such as constructing a new church building. There was, finally, the obligation for every adult male who was not a member of the clergy to take up arms [701 689] under his local lord whenever a levy was proclaimed. Those who did not respond to such a call were subject to fines or other punishment as well as the [626] barbs of public opinion.

*121 701 [702 714] The military organization of the Amhara was highly individualistic. Unlike the Galla, the Amhara did not provide for the collective training of their warriors. Each man was left to learn how to fight by himself and to provide his own equipment. A man could become a "career" soldier when he came of age simply by purchasing a shield; or he might prevail upon an established lord to arm him temporarily, with the promise of returning the equipment should he leave that lord's service. Similarly, there were no collective provisions for the supply of troops. Each man was left to fend for [705] himself, drawing upon the supply of grain he brought along and whatever booty he could acquire on the warpath; the preparation of his food was left to the wife or servant who accompanied him to battle.

*121 701 726 The conduct of a military operation exhibited a minimum of external constraint and discipline. Chains of command existed with respect to the general direction of troop movements, and the camping pattern was highly

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
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*756
*793 badly distort, and over-simplify the course of his career. For them, the contradictions are never reconciled, and remain a source of the awe with which they regard the debtera.

The debtera's career is, in fact, marked by years of deprivation and misery, of powerlessness and vulnerability before the forces of his social and physical environments. It is a life whose course is dominated by three interdependent interests. The first of these is the pursuit of the ecclesiastical goals which are the denotata of debtera-hood. The physical mobility and desperate insecurity which characterize the student's pursuit of the ecclesiastical goals eventually produce two valuable commercial assets for him---the acquisition of basic mercantile skills, and the willingness to face real dangers, both physical and moral. It is his capitalization of these assets that constitutes the second dominant interest. Ultimately, it is a life in which the pursuit and exercise of power, of the ability to control and influence the forces of his social and physical environments, that become dominant.

*756 In Ethiopian society legitimate power is descended
*793 from the Almighty, and mediated through the Emperor and
• 642 his designated officers. The mundane sources of such power are, first, the possession of rights to fields sufficient to attract and reward personal supporters,

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
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*756 *793 and, second, the exercise of political prerogative, [642] delegated by the state, with which to bestow favors and to direct sanctions. The debtera seeks power elsewhere, for he is a man without fields, kinfolk, or politically significant ties. It is in this quest, that he travels the path of apparent contradiction and real compromise, a path which ends in an attempt to wrest power from satanic sources, unmediated by any moral authority, and to legitimize it sui generis.

This chapter describes the debtera's life history, in terms of the sequence of recruitment criteria which an individual must meet before becoming a debtera, the decisions which he must make between alternative career paths, the knowledge, skills, and power which are acquired by the man who follows the path to debtera-hood.

Deferred to the concluding chapter is a comparison between the debtera-healer and the secular practitioner, and a description of the culmination of the debtera's quest for power, the satanic contract.

LEAVING THE PARISH

*[869] [192] Among the services provided at the parish church is instruction in the Amhara syllabary (fidal), and the ecclesiastical subjects required for ordination as a deacon (diyakon) and, subsequently, as a priest (keys).